WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN A REMOTE WORK SETTING

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Employers hire from work-integrated learning programs to recruit and retain talented students. Organizational commitment, or the students' emotional and psychological bond to the organization, is an important factor in achieving recruitment goals. This study explores the impact of workplace friendships on organizational commitment during a remote work-integrated learning (WIL) work term. Results show that even though WIL students only work for organizations for a short time, and may be physically distant from colleagues, many develop workplace friendships that strengthen their organizational commitment.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Many organizations recruit from work-integrated learning programs in hopes of recruiting for future work terms and full-time positions. If an employer can foster organizational commitment during a work term, they may increase their chances that a student will return to the employer. If an employer achieves their recruitment goals, they are more likely to continue to hire from WIL programs. This research looks at the quality of students' work experience through workplace friendships as it relates to the development of their organizational commitment.

Workplace friendships are enjoyable relationships with colleagues, and the researchers argue they are overlooked for WIL settings, since students' work terms are often short-term. The researchers wanted to know if workplace friendships do emerge in WIL settings. They also wanted to know if there is an association between workplace friendships and organizational commitment while controlling for other work experience quality factors.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers looked at two sources of data. The first was results from a survey administered to a sample of University of Waterloo co-op students (a type of WIL that alternates between academic and work terms). The survey asked participants to answer questions about the quality of their work term (which was remote) and about any workplace friendships.

The second source of data was a survey called Rate My Work Term (distributed to all co-op students at the end of their work term). This survey included questions about the work term experience including things like satisfaction with pay.

The researchers used the answers from the two surveys to measure workplace friendships, work experience quality, and organizational commitment.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The researchers found that workplace friendships may contribute to work experience quality that influences organizational commitment. The researchers found a positive association with workplace friendships and the students' report of a psychological bond with the organization. The researchers found that many students developed close friendships during their remote work terms, even though they were not physically working in an office together. Even after controlling for factors like pay, workplace friendships contributed to a quality work experience and organizational commitment.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

Educators and WIL practitioners can use this research to educate both students and employers on creating a quality work experience. Employers can use this research to consider how they can foster and encourage workplace friendships, which may increase organizational commitment that contributes to achieving recruitment goals.

CITATION

Drewery, D., and Knapp, K. (2022, Aug 31-Sep 2). Workplace Friendships and Organizational Commitment in a Remote Work Setting [Paper Presentation]. WACE 2022 International Research Symposium, Kanazawa, Japan.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

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The Work-Learn Institute at the University of Waterloo is the only institute in the world dedicated to research on co-operative education and other forms of work-integrated learning.

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